Identifying Household Hazards

1 Injury in the Home

Directions: Read the following passage and answer the questions below. Describe your experiences with home safety.

People think of home as a safe place. But each year, many people are injured at home. Young children and older people are more likely to injure themselves at home than are other people.

Young children are at risk because they are growing and learning. They are curious and want to explore their environment. They learn by doing, making mistakes, and imitating. Children are also very active. They enjoy running and jumping. But sometimes they go too far and do things that are unsafe. Fortunately, children are better able to recover from their injuries than are adults.

Children injure themselves at home by falling—especially from cribs, windows, and stairs. Other common injuries are poisoning from household chemicals, fire and burn injuries, and suffocation and choking on small objects.

Older people are also at risk for injury in the home. Changes in the way they see and move affect their ability to react to hazards. Many older people also live alone, so there is no one to help them when they are hurt. Common home injuries among the elderly include falls, suffocation, fire and burns, and poisoning.

1. Do you worry about hazards in your home? What are these? _____

_____

_____

2. Have you ever been injured at home? Have your children been injured at home? _____

_____

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3. What do you do to make your home safer? _____

_____

_____

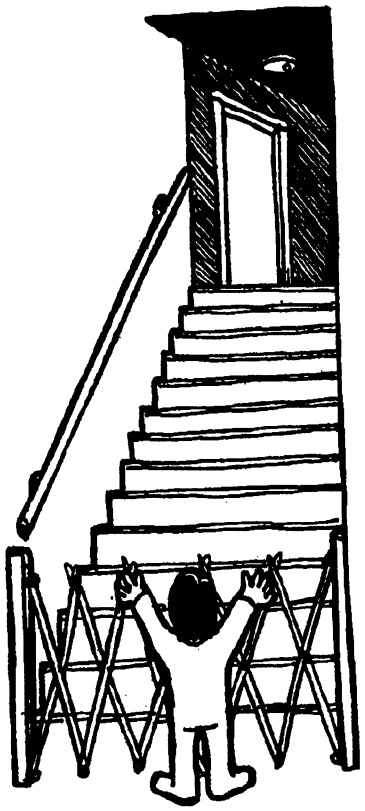
2 The Silent Hazard

Directions: Read the following passage.

Tong Quic and Hung Thu Tran never thought their house was a dangerous place until their daughter Mgi Ngor was born. By the time Mgi Ngor was two, she was into everything. She was climbing on the furniture. She was pulling at the curtains. She was reaching the top of the hot stove.

Therefore, the Trans took many precautions to make their home safe for Mgi Ngor. They put plugs in all the electrical outlets so that Mgi Ngor would not be shocked. They did not drink hot liquids when holding Mgi Ngor so that she would not be burned. They put all the dangerous chemicals out of Mgi Ngor's reach so that she would not be poisoned. They put window guards on the upstairs windows and a gate at the bottom of the stairs so that she could not climb up.

Tong Quic and Hung Thu did not stop there. They made sure that Mgi Ngor's toys were safe for her. They did not buy anything Mgi Ngor might swallow. They also installed smoke alarms in their home and frequently checked the batteries. They even asked their guests not to smoke cigarettes around Mgi Ngor. They always made smokers go outside.



Unfortunately, the Trans did not see an important hazard in their home. They had not guessed that their house contained lead. It was a fairly modern home. It had been built in the 1960s. They thought only older homes had lead paint. They soon learned that many homes built before 1978 contain some lead paint.

When Mgi Ngor turned three, the Trans learned that their daughter was poisoned with lead. On a routine checkup the doctor tested Mgi Ngor and found that she had some lead in her blood. Her lead level was only borderline dangerous, but the Trans were very worried.

The Trans asked the doctor how Mgi Ngor was poisoned. He explained that Mgi Ngor was probably poisoned by lead paint in their home. Tong Quic and Hung Thu said that their daughter did not eat lead paint. But the doctor told them that Mgi Ngor was probably not poisoned by eating the paint. The doctor said that the lead paint turned to dust and settled on Mgi Ngor's toys. When Mgi Ngor played with her toys, the lead got on her fingers and then into her mouth.

The doctor told Tong Quic and Hung Thu that Mgi Ngor might be fine if they follow certain procedures, such as watching what Mgi Ngor put in her mouth, mopping the floors with a damp mop, wiping down furniture and windowsills with a damp cloth, washing Mgi Ngor's hands before meals, vacuuming rugs and carpets frequently, making sure Mgi Ngor eats nutritious meals, and making sure Mgi Ngor does not eat dirt, which may contain lead paint chips. But he also said that she may have problems later in life. He asked the Trans to bring Mgi Ngor back for another checkup in three months.

Note to Student: For more information on the health problems associated with lead poisoning, see the units "Going to the Doctor" and "Identifying Symptoms of Illness."

3 Vocabulary

Directions: Review the vocabulary words below and define each using simple English terms.

injury(ies) *(n.)*
suffocation(s) *(n.)*
precaution(s) *(n.)*
electrical *(adj.)*
burn *(v.)*
window(s) *(n.)*
dangerous *(adj.)*
toy(s) *(n.)*
lead *(n.)*
modern *(adj.)*
railings *(n.)*
stair(s) *(n.)*
wall(s) *(n.)*
fire(s) *(n.)*
choke *(v.)*
cautious *(adj.)*
shock *(v.)*
poison *(v.)*
chemical(s) *(n.)*
door(s) *(n.)*
paint *(n.)*
build *(v.)*
trim *(n.)*
radiator(s) *(n.)*
vent(s) *(n.)*
floor(s) *(n.)*

4 Review and Discuss

Directions: Review "The Silent Hazard" and answer the following questions.

1. How old is the Trans's house? _____

2. What did Tong Quic and Hung Thu do to make their house safe for Mgi Ngor? _____

3. What were Tong Quic and Hung Thu shocked to learn? _____

_____

_____

4. What did the doctor tell the Trans? _____

_____

_____

5. How did Mgi Ngor become poisoned? _____

_____

_____

5 Topics for Discussion

Directions: Discuss lead poisoning hazards that can be found in homes. Answer the following questions.

1. Do you live in an older home? Was your home built before 1978? _____

_____

_____

2. Do you have young children in your house? How old are they? _____

_____

_____

3. Lead-based paint is hard and glossy. Do you have any hard, glossy paint on your windows, doors, stairs, railings, and trim? _____

_____

_____

4. Have you ever had a lead inspection or tested your home for lead? Why or why not? _____

_____

_____

5. Do you think your house contains lead? If so, where is the lead paint? ___

_____

_____

6 Testing Your Paint for Lead

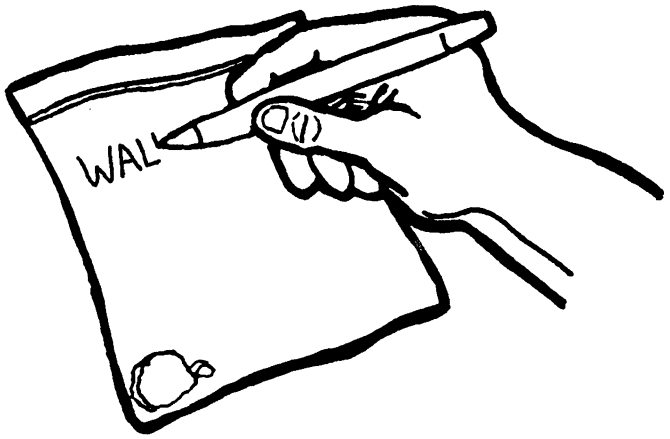
Directions: Read the directions below for testing lead in house paint. Follow the directions and collect paint samples from your home. Bring your samples to the next class. The teacher will locate the nearest certified testing laboratory and mail class samples to be tested. When test results return, discuss the results.

Test painted surfaces that your child has chewed, or woodwork in your child's room. Woodwork, such as doors, windows, or trim, will often have a lot of lead in the paint. Any area that is peeling is also a good choice for testing.

√ Keep samples from different areas separate.

√ Use a knife to scrape sections of paint, at least the size of a quarter, down to the bare wood or plaster. Do not take the wood or plaster with your sample or your paint results will not be accurate.

√ Put the samples in clean, plastic bags. With a permanent marker, write where you got the sample from on the bag.



Send the samples to a lab certified by your state health department. Call your local health department for a list of certified labs.

7 Discuss and Compare Test Results

Directions: Review the table below.

Lead paint is found in older homes. How old is your house? Do you live in a single family or multifamily house? How likely is it that your house has lead paint?

Housing Type	Percentage of Houses Containing Exterior Lead Paint
All pre-1978 housing	74%
Year Built	
1960-1979	62%
1940-1959	80%
Before 1940	90%
Housing Type	
Single Family	74%
Multifamily	73%